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UNCLAS HANOI 002686

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ACTION AID-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	CIAE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EAP-00	EB-00
	FBIE-00	UTED-00	FDRE-01	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	L-00	VCE-00	DCP-01	NSAE-00	PM-00	IRM-00	TEST-00
	TRSE-00	ECA-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00

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P 060936Z NOV 02
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8026
INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
JICPAC HONOLULU HI
SECDEF WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
USDOC WASHDC

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SIPDIS

AIDAC

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV AND EAP/PD
USAID/DCHA/FFP FOR BRAUSE AND LANDIS
USAID/DCHA/OFDA FOR THAYER
MANILA FOR USAID/OFDA FOR DOLAN AND ROGERS
USAID/ANE FOR FERRARA

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CINCPAC FOR FPA, J3 AND J4
SECDEF FOR OSD/LIC/SOLIC/PKHA
USDOC FOR 4431/MAC/AP/OKSA/HPPHO
PACIFIC COMMAND

AID/DCHA/OFDA THAYER
MANILA FOR OFDA TDOLAN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: VIETNAM - WHERE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS IS SERIOUS
BUSINESS

1. SUMMARY: USAID/DCHA/OFDA'S REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR ASIA VISITED HANOI OCTOBER 27-30 TO REVIEW DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE ACTIVITIES INCLUDING THOSE FUNDED BY OFDA. THE GVNGVN CONTINUES TO DEMONSTRATE AN EXCEPTIONAL COMMITMENT TO DISASTER PREPAREDNESS THAT IS PERHAPS UNMATCHED IN THE ASIA REGION. THIS COMMITMENT STEMS FROM A DISASTER PREPAREDNESS CULTURE SHAPED BY VIETNAM'S EXTREME VULNERABILITY TO NATURAL DISASTERS SUCH AS FLOODS AND TYPHOONS. FLOOD LEVELS IN THE MEKONG BASIN THIS YEAR WERE COMPARABLE TO 2000 AND 2001, BUT EFFECTIVE GVN PREPAREDNESS MEASURES GREATLY REDUCED LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY. USAID/OFDA IS SUPPORTING TWO ONGOING DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROJECTS IN VIETNAM, INCLUDING A FLOOD EARLY WARNING SYSTEM IN CENTRAL VIETNAM AND A COASTAL STORM EARLY WARNING SYSTEM. USAID/OFDA HAS ALSO PROVIDED EMERGENCY RELIEF ASSISTANCE TO VIETNAM TOTALING ABOUT USD 1.3 MILLION SINCE 1999.

2. USAID/DCHA/OFDA'S REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR ASIA VISITED
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HANOI OCTOBER 27-30 TO REVIEW DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE ACTIVITIES IN VIETNAM, INCLUDING THOSE FUNDED BY OFDA. REGIONAL COORDINATOR ROB THAYER MET WITH EMBASSY AND USAID COLLEAGUES, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS REPRESENTATIVES, NGOS, AND A GVN DISASTER MANAGEMENT UNIT WHICH IMPLEMENTS TWO OFDA-FUNDED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROJECTS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP).

3. A DISASTER PREPAREDNESS CULTURE: THE GVN CONTINUES TO DEMONSTRATE AN EXCEPTIONAL COMMITMENT TO NATURAL DISASTER PREPAREDNESS THAT IS PERHAPS UNMATCHED IN THE ASIA REGION. GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS DWARF CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND THE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AGENDA HERE IS CLEARLY DRIVEN BY NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND NOT BY DONORS.

4. VIETNAM'S COMMITMENT TO DISASTER PREPAREDNESS STEMS FROM WHAT HAS BEEN CALLED A DISASTER PREPAREDNESS CULTURE, SHAPED

BY THE COUNTRY'S HISTORIC VULNERABILITY TO FLOODS AND TYPHOONS. RECENT REMINDERS OF THIS VULNERABILITY INCLUDE THE DEVASTATING CENTRAL VIETNAM FLOODS OF 1999, AND THE MEKONG RIVER FLOODS OF 2000, EACH RESULTING IN HUNDREDS OF DEATHS AND PROPERTY LOSSES IN THE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS. EVEN HANOI ITSELF, PROTECTED FROM THE RED RIVER FOR CENTURIES BY AN ELABORATE SYSTEM OF DIKES, IS FEARED TO BE VULNERABLE NOW, AS NATURAL FLOOD PROTECTION SUCH AS UPSTREAM FORESTATION IS DEPLETED.

15. THE GVN WAS REMARKABLY WELL-PREPARED FOR THIS YEAR'S MEKONG DELTA FLOODING WHICH PEAKED IN SEPTEMBER, ACCORDING
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TO RELIEF AGENCIES WORKING IN THE AREA. WHILE FLOOD LEVELS WERE COMPARABLE TO THOSE OF 2000 AND 2001, LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY WERE CONSIDERABLY REDUCED BY CREATION OF "ISLANDS" AS SAFE HAVENS FOR EVACUEES AND THEIR BELONGINGS (IN MOST CASES ELEVATED AND WIDENED ROADWAYS); EFFECTIVE PRE-POSITIONING OF RELIEF SUPPLIES IN FLOOD-PRONE SUB-DISTRICTS; AND STRENGTHENING OF SECONDARY DIKES WHICH PROTECTED MUCH OF THE FOOD CROP LONG ENOUGH TO ENABLE HARVESTING.

16. THE COORDINATING BODY FOR NATURAL DISASTER RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS IN VIETNAM IS THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR FLOOD AND STORM CONTROL, HEADED BY THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, WHICH OVERSEES A NETWORK OF PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT-LEVEL COMMITTEES. THE PRIME MINISTER TAKES A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THESE EFFORTS, AND LOCAL OFFICIALS IN DISASTER-PRONE AREAS ARE SAID TO BE ACUTELY AWARE THAT JOB SECURITY DEPENDS PARTLY ON THEIR PERFORMANCE IN PREPARING FOR AND RESPONDING TO THESE DISASTERS.

17. USAID/OFDA DISASTER ASSISTANCE: USAID/DCHA/OFDA IS CURRENTLY FUNDING TWO MULTI-YEAR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROJECTS IN VIETNAM: A FLOOD EARLY WARNING SYSTEM IN CENTRAL

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VIETNAM (USD 994,000 FROM 2000-2004), AND A COASTAL STORM EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (USD 1.44 MILLION FROM 2001-2004). BOTH PROJECTS ARE IMPLEMENTED BY THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT UNIT (DMU), A UNDP-SUPPORTED TECHNICAL UNIT UNDER THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR FLOOD AND STORM CONTROL.

18. THE USAID/OFDA-FUNDED CENTRAL VIETNAM PROJECT HAS ALREADY RESULTED IN REGULAR FLOOD AND STORM WARNING BROADCASTS ON THE THREE NATIONAL TELEVISION STATIONS, AND WILL EVENTUALLY RESULT IN STATE-OF-THE-ART FLOOD EARLY

WARNING CAPABILITIES IN SEVEN FLOOD-PRONE PROVINCES. THE WEBSITE DEVELOPED THROUGH THIS PROJECT IS NOW THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF DAILY AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON DISASTER CONDITIONS IN VIETNAM FOR DISTRICT, PROVINCIAL, AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, EVIDENCED BY MORE THAN 73,000 VISITS TO THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE VERSION OF THE WEBSITE TO DATE. THE WEBSITE CAN BE ACCESSED AT WWW.UNDP.ORG/DMU.

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19. THROUGH THE USAID/OFDA-FUNDED COASTAL STORM EARLY WARNING PROJECT, TECHNOLOGY IS BEING DEVELOPED TO ENABLE VIETNAM'S SUBSISTENCE FISHING BOATS TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE WARNING OF APPROACHING STORMS THROUGH LOW-COST, SIGNAL-ACTIVATED RADIO RECEIVERS. VIETNAM HAS ABOUT 80,000 REGISTERED VESSELS ALONG ITS COASTLINE, MOST OF THEM SMALL FISHING BOATS. THE VULNERABILITY OF THESE FISHING COMMUNITIES TO COASTAL STORMS WAS DRAMATICALLY ILLUSTRATED IN 1997 WHEN OVER 3,000 FISHERMEN AND WOMEN WERE LOST DURING TYPHOON LINDA.

110. USAID/OFDA HAS ALSO PROVIDED EMERGENCY RELIEF THROUGH EMBASSY HANOI IN RESPONSE TO FLOODS AND STORMS IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN VIETNAM TOTALING ABOUT USD 1.3 MILLION SINCE 1999, MAINLY THROUGH THE RED CROSS AND NGOS. TWO TRAILER-MOUNTED WATER PURIFICATION UNITS RECENTLY PROVIDED TO THE GVN BY USAID/OFDA THROUGH CARE/VIETNAM, EACH CAPABLE OF PRODUCING 200,000 LITERS OF DRINKING WATER DAILY, ARE NOW BEING UTILIZED IN FLOOD-AFFECTED MEKONG COMMUNITIES.

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